

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 177

June 25, 1998, 5:07 p.m.
Page S-7077 Temp. Record

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION/Flight Training at Mountain Home Air Base

SUBJECT: National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1999 . . . S. 2057. Kempthorne motion to table the Reid amendment No. 3009.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 49-44

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 2057, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1999, will authorize \$270.6 billion in budget authority for national defense programs (this amount is equal to the requested level, and is in accordance with the budget agreement of last year). In real terms, spending will be \$2.9 billion less than last year. As a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), defense spending will be just 3.1 percent, which will be the lowest level of defense spending since 1940. Defense spending has declined steadily since 1986, when it was 6.5 percent of GDP.

The Reid amendment would prevent the Air Force from expanding a flight training range at Mountain Home Air Base in Idaho.

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. After debate, Senator Kempthorne moved to table the Reid amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

Mountain Home Air Base is a composite-wing base with F-15s, F-16s, B-1 bombers, and C-135 tankers. Having a composite wing is unusual. If the United States gets into a military conflict, it is highly likely that aircraft from this base will be among the first that will be called on to respond. Consequently, one of the Air Force's top priorities is to keep this base at peak readiness at all times. The base currently has a training range for pilots, but it has only one approach from which that range can be accessed. Much of the pilots' ongoing training must therefore be at other bases. The proposal of the Air Force is to add 12,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, called the Juniper Butte Range, to its existing 109,000-acre range. This addition will make it possible for all of the aircrews to simulate real-world scenarios and to practice complex missions. The training will be better than they now

(See other side)

YEAS (49)		NAYS (44)			NOT VOTING (7)	
Republicans (49 or 94%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (3 or 6%)	Democrats (41 or 100%)		Republicans (3)	Democrats (4)
Abraham	Helms	Bennett	Biden	Kennedy	Hutchinson ⁻⁴	Akaka ⁻²
Allard	Hutchison	Hatch	Bingaman	Kerrey	Roth ⁻²	Baucus ⁻²
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Smith, Gordon	Boxer	Kerry	Specter ⁻³	Glenn ⁻²
Bond	Jeffords		Breaux	Kohl		Rockefeller ⁻²
Brownback	Kempthorne		Bryan	Landrieu		
Burns	Kyl		Bumpers	Lautenberg		
Campbell	Lott		Byrd	Leahy		
Chafee	Lugar		Cleland	Levin		
Coats	Mack		Conrad	Lieberman		
Cochran	McCain		Daschle	Mikulski		
Collins	McConnell		Dodd	Moseley-Braun		
Coverdell	Murkowski		Dorgan	Moynihan		
Craig	Nickles		Durbin	Murray		
D'Amato	Roberts		Feingold	Reed		
DeWine	Santorum		Feinstein	Reid		
Domenici	Sessions		Ford	Robb		
Enzi	Shelby		Graham	Sarbanes		
Faircloth	Smith, Bob		Harkin	Torricelli		
Frist	Snowe		Hollings	Wellstone		
Gorton	Stevens		Inouye	Wyden		
Gramm	Thomas		Johnson			
Grams	Thompson					
Grassley	Thurmond					
Gregg	Warner					
Hagel						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

obtain by scattering to various sites, and it will convert time currently spent in transit into actual training time. Thus, this proposal will allow the Air Force to use limited flight training hours more efficiently. Three basic arguments have been raised against this proposal. First, it has been alleged that the proposal is just a way to try to keep this particular base off the base closure list. However, this base, like similar bases in Nevada, has never been on the list because it is in a remote, unpopulated area, which maximizes flying time. Second, some Senators have complained that the process used in drawing up the details of this proposal ignored the rights of Indians, and at the same time treated the one rancher who will be affected far too generously. This second claim is just utter nonsense. No fewer than 26 meetings were held with the affected Indian tribe, the Shoshone-Paiute. That tribe provided a map to the Air Force showing the area that it wanted reserved because it was sacred to them. The Air Force looked at that map, and made sure it selected an area outside of the indicated area. It picked an alternative that was selected by the Bureau of Land Management. That land was being used by a rancher whose family had been leasing it and improving it since 1880. Under the family's stewardship, and with the investment of hundreds of thousands of dollars, that land has become extremely productive. This one rancher will lose hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of improvements that his family has made, and he deserves to be compensated. The third claim by our colleagues is that this new training range will damage the environment. We inform our colleagues that the Secretary of Interior and the Director of the Council on Environmental Quality both support the language that is in this bill. In fact, they helped draft it. Numerous protections for the environment will be required. For instance, our colleagues have said that this amendment will increase flights over Owyhee Canyon in Idaho, but what they have failed to mention is that when they fly above the canyon rim, they will have to be at an altitude of at least 5,000 feet; currently, they can and do fly just 100 feet above the rim. To develop the environmental standards that will be followed, 16 public hearings were held in 3 different States, over 400 witnesses were heard, and over 1,000 comments were received. No one was shut out of the process, and the environment will be fully protected. Expanding this training base has been a top priority of the Air Force for many years. We believe that the current proposal that is authorized in this bill will enhance our military capabilities while at the same time it will fairly address the concerns of the affected Indian tribe and of environmentalists. We therefore urp